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I HAVE A CHILD TO BE BAPTIZED

I Have a Child to be Baptized,

and there are a few questions I want to ask on how to plan the Baptism.

When Should We Have the Baptism?

As soon as the baby can be brought to the church.

Your child has a right to be taken into the Church family at the very beginning of his life. Baptism should not be postponed.

Also, it is a more peaceful experience to baptize a baby in the first or second month of his life than to wait longer, since older children are apt to be fretful and rebellious during the service.

The best time to have your child baptized is now. Why not make your plans at once?

What Arrangements Are Necessary?

Deciding on a Name

By being born into your family, your child naturally takes the family name, whether it be Smith, Jansen or Antonelli. When he is brought into the Church, which is the family of God, he is given a "Christian" name chosen by you.

Some people believe that Christian names should be taken from the Bible, like John, Mary, Mark and Elizabeth. Others prefer to name their children after relatives or friends.

The important thing is to select a name your child will be proud of all his life.

Choosing Godparents

A boy should have two Godfathers and one Godmother; a girl two Godmothers and one Godfather. These Godparents act as sponsors for your child and, together with you, promise that as the child grows up he shall be taught the Christian faith and eventually be brought to Confirmation.

Because of the importance and the seriousness of their promises, Godparents should be chosen carefully. People who have little religious interest are not suitable, even though they are your closest friends. The best God-

parents are persons who are confirmed members of our Church and take an active interest in Church life; though baptized and active members of other Christian churches are satisfactory if you explain to them the importance of their final promise to bring your child in due time to Confirmation.

If you cannot find friends suitable as sponsors, you as parents may serve as one or two of the Godparents.

When a Godparent lives at a distance and cannot come to the Baptism for a long time, you may ask someone else to represent him at the service. It is better to do this than to postpone the Baptism indefinitely.

Notifying the Minister

Telephone or go to see the minister of your church when you are making your plans. Give him the following information:

1. Child's Christian name
2. Place and date of birth
3. Father's full name
4. Mother's maiden name
5. Names of the Godparents

Arrange a date and hour for the Baptism with the minister. Baptisms may be held during the Sunday morning service, at the close of this service, or at any time on Sunday or during the week convenient for all concerned.

Shall I Plan to Give the Minister a Fee?

No. Baptism is a sacrament of the Church through which God freely gives us his grace. Neither the Church nor the minister wish to be paid for Baptism.

What Is the Meaning of Baptism?

Washing Away of Sin

Your baby is now unaware of the difference between right and wrong. He knows little about the world and nothing about God.

If your baby is human, however, already he has within him the seed of self-interest. At present he may show this self-interest in nothing more serious than crying for your attention when you have lots of other things to do around the house. He expects the world to revolve around him.

As your child grows, his self-interest grows also — unless it is held in check. It can grow into such harmful things as hatred, dishonesty, fear and selfishness, things we do not hesitate to call "sins." But Christians believe that this self-interest can be held in check by an experience that begins in Baptism. That is why Baptism is called "the washing away of sin" and why water is used as the symbol of this cleansing.

A New Birth

Christians believe that your child's best chance of a full and useful life is in being a member of the Church. In the Church he may learn about Christ and worship him; here he may know the meaning of humility, repentance and forgiveness; and here belong to a large family which looks to God as its father. Only by such an experience can your child conquer the self-interest and the sins we have been talking about.

Because Baptism brings a child into the family of God, it is spoken of as "a new birth."

The Sign of the Cross

In Baptism the sign of the Cross is put upon your child's forehead. He is thereby enlisted as "Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end."

How Important Is Baptism?

It may be argued that religion does not depend on performing rites and belonging to institutions; but when we talk that way we are not talking about Christianity. From start to finish Christianity is a sacramental religion, counting it important that spiritual life be expressed in visible forms.

For 2,000 years, from the time of Jesus, Baptism has been the customary way for people to join the Church and become Christians. What better way — what other way is there for parents to declare their intention of giving their child a Christian upbringing and asking God's blessing upon him?

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Jesus said: "SUFFER THE LITTLE CHILDREN TO COME UNTO ME, AND FORBID THEM NOT: FOR OF SUCH IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD."

— St. Mark 10:14

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